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**ROMNEY ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCES \$2 MILLION IN
OPEN SPACE GRANTS FOR ROUTE 3 NORTH COMMUNITIES**

State transportation and environmental officials today presented open space grants totaling nearly \$2 million to three communities along the Route 3 North corridor. The grants were paid out of a \$4 million account created by the Massachusetts Highway Department (MassHighway) in 2000 to help towns along Route 3 North meet their open space protection goals during the highway's expansion.

"Governor Romney believes that the Highway Department is about more than just roads and bridges. He believes that the agency must also take steps to preserve open space and protect the environment," said Transportation Secretary Daniel A. Grabauskas. "This is a great opportunity for us to promote the long-term stewardship of a valuable parcel of land."

"Each of these acquisitions represents a great win for the communities involved and collectively we all benefit from the significant additions made to the green infrastructure of our state," said Environmental Secretary Ellen Herzfelder. "With the help of our public and private partners in cities and towns around the Commonwealth, we will continue to preserve the special places that contribute so much to the high quality of life we enjoy here in Massachusetts."

The \$4 million open space fund, which is administered by MassHighway through the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, is accessible to all communities along the Route 3 project corridor. In the past, the fund has disbursed approximately \$2 million worth of open space grants to Billerica, Tyngsborough, Burlington, Bedford, and Chelmsford. The City of Lowell and the towns of Tyngsborough and Billerica were the recipients of the grants announced today.

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A \$136,000 grant to Lowell will help the city acquire a railroad right of way along the Concord River, connecting several local parks and extending the Concord River Greenway. Part of the 200-mile Bay Circuit Trail, this parcel has been a high priority for the Lowell Conservation Trust. The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation will hold the conservation restriction.

A \$1.1 million grant to Tyngsborough will preserve a parcel with frontage on Long Pond along the New Hampshire border. Offering excellent wildlife and rare species habitat, this acquisition also has the potential for a swimming beach. Tyngsborough will acquire the land and the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game will hold the conservation restriction.

A \$704,000 grant to Billerica will allow the Sudbury Valley Trustees to acquire a parcel along the Concord River that provides public access for walkers and canoers. The parcel includes excellent wildlife habitat and forms a key connection to the Concord River Greenway. The Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game will hold the conservation restriction for the Sudbury Valley Trustees.

“I am very pleased with the announcement of funding to preserve the beautiful and historic Concord River parcel in Billerica,” said Representative William G. Greene Jr. (D-Billerica), Chairperson of the House Committee on Natural Resources and Agriculture. “Its protection from development provides excellent recreation opportunities as well as protecting vital open space for current and future generations.”

The grants are awarded through a competitive process that involves specific rating criteria to evaluate a community’s funding request. The committee that decides grant awards is comprised of state transportation and environmental officials.

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